



Blow Away Child Abuse: Every Child Deserves A Healthy and Supportive Environment!



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When You Can Be a Homeowner!*



CITY OF OCALA MAYOR LAUNCHES QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

City of Ocala Mayor Ben Marciano, recently launched a quarterly newsletter to provide an overview of his community engagement and updates from the Ocala Police Department.

The newsletter will be available the last Friday in March, June, September and December, with the inaugural issue launching Friday, March 29.

The community is encouraged to subscribe to the newsletter by signing up online at <https://www.ocalafl.gov/our-city/advanced-components/enotification>.

For more information, please contact the Office of the Mayor at (352) 401-3977.



TOWN Talk MAGAZINE

Sharing the good news happening
in our community.

Founders

Monica Bryant & Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Editor

Monica Bryant

Photography/Editor

Cynthia Wilson-Graham

Contributors

Scott Hackmyer

Let's Talk

We want to hear from you:

Email your submissions, events, comments or questions to **Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com**. Please include contact information (name and phone number) on the submission. Deadline is the first Monday of each month for the following month's publication.

Policy Statement

All submissions become the sole property of Town Talk Magazine.

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Town Talk. All articles, announcements and advertisements submitted are subject to refusal and editing at the editor's discretion.

Contact Us:

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Ocala, FL 34478
(352) 897-1817

Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com
or **Towntalkmagazine.org**.

EDITOR'S DESK



For many years, I've heard the saying "April showers bring May flowers," but never knew what it meant, so I looked it up. When people complain about all the rainy weather in the spring, literally the expression is a reminder that April showers are helpful. But it also has a deeper meaning. Even after long periods of adversity, good times will follow.

I don't know about you, but I'm still waiting on those "good times" to come. In the past few months, I've experienced a lot of loss, and not just the physical loss of a loved one and a classmate, but the loss of time, that I can't get back, doing things that really don't matter, but more importantly PEACE, something we all need!

Every morning I try to remind myself not to let anyone or anything still my joy. It's getting harder and harder to do. Some days I'm successful, but as I approach a milestone birthday this month, I think a lot about Self-Care. Until now, thinking about it is all I've done. I've always put everyone else's needs and wants before mine. As I read the definition of Self-Care, which means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health, I realize it's time to do more than just talk about it. I need to start doing it because it can help me manage my stress, although I act like I don't have any, lower my risk of illness and increase my energy.



Practicing self-care may be something some of you started doing a long time ago and now it's easy for you, but for people like me, when all I do in my personal and professional life is take care of others, it will take A LOT of effort, but I like a challenge. I'm determined to be the best version of myself that I can be.

Among all the great events happening in our community during the month of April, the fundraiser benefitting Shepherd's Light House may be just what the doctor ordered.

The work that Yolando East and her team does for families in our community is amazing. The nonprofit organization, which pioneered transitional housing in Belleview more than 20 years ago, helps people navigate through life's storms by rescuing, empowering and renewing their lives. They are dedicated to helping people in need.

Sounds like a great way to start doing some self care and support a good cause at the same time. Sponsorships and tickets are available at <https://bit.ly/3VzjmzF> or scan the QR code on the flyer.

Come join us for
Drinks
Dinner
Improv Theatre
Coffee Bar & Dessert
April 13 @ 5:30 p.m.
Klein Center, College of CF
Sponsorships & Tickets: <https://bit.ly/3VzjmzF>

Let's Talk!

Monica Bryant

Monica T. Bryant, Editor



APRIL IS CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH



EVERY 13 SECONDS A CHILD IS ABUSED

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COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

MEET ASHLEY GLOVER

SANKOFA PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCH SUPERVISOR



Ashley Glover still reads anything she can get her hands on. As a child, she has fond memories of her grandmother taking her to the Reddick Public Library.

"I loved it," she said. "Looking back, I can see how a small library made such a difference to me in my life and had such an impact on my community."

Now as the Branch Library Supervisor at the Sankofa Library, located inside the Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, Glover is grateful for the opportunity to help make the public library as meaningful to others as it has been to her.

"My vision for the Sankofa Public Library is to create a welcoming community presence that fosters lifelong learning, inspires creativity and imagination and empowers the community," said Glover, who has worked for the Marion County Public Library System in various positions for 10 years.

Although the Sankofa Library has only been open a little over a year, Glover said it is gaining interest from all over the area, and their circulation, program attendance and library use has increased every month. She said it has roughly 3,000 visitors a month, and she anticipates a sharp increase as more people find out what an amazing resource it is.

"The public library has something for everyone! If you want to learn a new craft, fix a motor, learn a language, talk with other people, research a topic, read a book that was the basis for a recent movie you saw, your public library is the "go-to" place for this information," she said.

Glover believes that public libraries are more important than ever as they are vital community hubs that connects neighbors, children, families and adults with the world around them. They offer resources and information in a variety of formats, including books in print, downloadable e-books, audiobooks, e-audio, magazines and electronic databases for research and general information that can be accessed from home or in the library. Free WIFI, computer and web assistance and wireless printing at all library locations are also provided.

"The advantage with public library database resources is that they are vetted and serve as accurate sources of information versus misinformation," Glover said. "The public can receive answers to questions from trained library staff in-person, by mail, telephone and virtually via Ask-a-Librarian."

Many library services are free and can be accessed by anyone, but in order to check out books and library materials, a library card is the "smartest card" for all ages. The card allows free access to library collections of more than 500,000 items for children, teens and adults, unlimited computer reservations and an interlibrary loan service that allows access to materials from a network of other library systems within the state. She said you can borrow items from any of the nine Marion County Public Library System branches and return them to any location.

Glover encourages the public to visit the other locations too, but Diane Johnson, the former supervisor at Sankofa, had a saying she just loves.

"The public library is for you! This is so true for the Sankofa Public Library," she said. "We strive to be a welcoming and inclusive place for people from all backgrounds and walks of life to read, learn and connect."

The Sankofa Library is open Monday - Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Program and event details can be accessed at library.marionfl.org or follow them on Facebook and Instagram. They also have a quarterly WORDS magazine.

For information or assistance, call (352) 438-2550.

SANKOFA PUBLIC LIBRARY

1821 NW 21st Avenue, Ocala, FL 34475
(352) 438-2550

Programs made possible by contributions from the Friends of the Ocala Public Library.

Special Guest: Windell Campbell

Sunday, April 7, 2 p.m.

Back by popular demand! Dynamic, highly animated storyteller. Windell brings his stories and puppets too!

Ready...Set...Kindergarten!

Saturday, April 13, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

For ages 4-5 with caregivers. Help your child make sense of the big, big world of schools through these fun, hands-on experiences.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Games on a Table

Mondays, 4 p.m.

April 1 - 29

Play classic/contemporary tabletop games!

Crochet Corner

Thursdays, 4:30 p.m.

April 11 and 25

Relax and crochet. All skill levels welcome.

ADULTS

Tech Help Thursdays, 2 p.m. April 4 - 25

Have a technology question?

Book Club

See Program Spotlight for more clubs.

2nd Story Readers Tuesdays, 10:30 a.m.

April 16 "**The Color Purple**" by Alice Walker

TEENS

YALLA! Teen Club

Tuesdays, 4:30 p.m.

Young Adults Lead Library Awareness! Be a part of a talented teen team and make the library a better experience for all. Guide, participate and design innovative library programs while enjoying snacks and making friends and earn volunteer hours for service.

MANGAlicious April 2

ConFAB April 16

FAMILIES

Happy Feet Fitness Thursdays, 10 a.m.

April 4 - 25. For ages 3-5 with caregivers.

Presented with the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department.

Story Time

Family Story Time

Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m. April 3- 24

Stories, songs and activities for children and caregivers.

The **Community Spotlight** highlights a person, place or event in our community. Tell us what's happening around town so we can share your **Good News** with others. Email submissions to Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com.

MOBILE CAREER CENTER IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Penny Spence, Mobile Career Development Representative II

Penny Spence has only been in her position for four months, but she's excited about the positive impact CareerSource's Mobile Career Center (MCC) is making in the community.

"I've only been on the Mobile Career Center for one month and during that month, I've assisted more than 40 customers," she said.

Spence has worked for CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion for more than 15 years and is now the Mobile Career Development Representative II. She's assisted multiple people with services where they possibly would not have received them previously, and several individuals who have had assistance through the MCC have obtained employment or are better prepared for their job searches.

"Hearing that customers have obtained employment, earned their GED or are getting interviews now that they have a completed resume is rewarding," Spence said. "I love providing help to someone who didn't think they would be able to receive any services. And really just listening, hearing them out and supporting them."

The 22-foot Dodge Sprinter, which hit the road in 2011, has four computer workstations with internet access and office equipment such as a copier, scanner and phone.

Laura Byrnes, APR, CPRC, Director of Communications, CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion, said the idea for the MCC, originally called the Mobile Resource Unit or (MRU) and nicknamed the Moby, originated with their team as an additional way to serve businesses and job seekers, especially those unable to get to their brick-and-mortar Career Centers. She said they have a lot of remote areas in their three-county region, and they were able to obtain the mobile unit at low-to-no cost as surplus inventory from another CareerSource region.

Although the schedule for the MCC is published on their website under Calendar of Events, promoted on their Facebook Live Business Showcase and on social media thanks to community partners, Spence wants to get the word out on the location of the MCC each month and the services they can provide. She said the goal is to reach individuals who are in need of or want to take advantage of their services, which are free.

"I feel that there's a need in the community for our services and sometimes individuals are unable to get to our three locations for one reason or another," she said. "I'm excited to offer and provide services to any job seekers or businesses in need of our fee-free services."

The MCC serves Marion, Citrus and Levy counties, and the hours it operates is based on the location. Byrnes said they can provide job seekers one-on-one consultations, resume and job-search assistance and referral and help applying for Reemployment Assistance (Unemployment Compensation), Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP also known as food stamps), other support services and information on upcoming job fairs and hiring events. For businesses, they can serve as an extension of their workplace to handle candidates' applications, assessments and even interviewing during hiring events so their regular operations aren't disrupted.

The MCC has also been utilized to assist areas hard hit by natural disasters. After Hurricane Idalia, mobile services were provided in Crystal River, Cedar Key and Inglis to help residents find work and file for disaster unemployment relief services. Services were also provided to residents in Daytona Beach after Hurricane Ian and the Panhandle following Hurricane Michael.

"When we go to other CareerSource Florida regions recovering from disaster, we rotate in volunteer teams, typically four to six staff members on a weekly basis for six to eight weeks," Byrnes said.

Spence said it's very exciting to see the results of the MCC. In the last three months individuals that visited the Center that received resumes, job search assistance as well as interview strategies have obtained employment. She encourages residents to contact her to request the MCC come to their community and to discuss when and what services are needed because every site is different and has different needs.

"We attempt to reach out to our partners for suggestions, particularly looking at more rural areas that are not on the bus line," Spence said. "There are so many parts of this job that are rewarding to me."

For information or to request the MCC come to your community, call Spence at **(352) 732-1700 ext. 1933** or via email at pspence@careersourceclm.com. Visit CareerSourceclm.com for updates on where the MCC will be or email Spence for a copy of the most recent calendar.





WHERE WILL WE BE IN APRIL 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 SMA 12:30 to 3:30 - Men's group (MC)	2 Probation Office - Cascades 9:30 to 3:30 (MC)	3 Community Home Project 8:30 to 4 (MC)	4 Williston Library 10 to 3 (LC)	5	6
7	8 Beverly Hills Library - 9 to 12 (CC) Crystal River Library 1 to 3:30	9 St. Theresa Catholic Church 9 to 12 (MC) Parkside APTS 1 to 4 (MC)	10 Prairie Oaks Chiefland - 10 to 3 (LC)	11 Mary Sue Rich Complex 9 to 12 (MC)	12 Probation Office - Near Ocala Airport - 9:30 to 3:30 (MC)	13
14	15 DayStar - 10 to 3:30 (CC)	16 St. Theresa Catholic Church 9 to 12 (MC) Strong Families - Belleview 1-3:30pm (MC)	17 Community Home Project (Howard Academy) 8:30 to 4 (MC)	18 Homosassa Library - 9 to 12 (CC) Inverness Library - 1 to 3:30 (CC)	19	20
21	22 Freedom Library 10 - 3:30 (MC)	23 St. Theresa Catholic Church 9 to 12 (MC) Belleview Library 1 to 3:30 (MC)	24 Community Home Project (Howard Academy) 8:30 to 4 (MC)	25 YMCA Lecanto 10 to 3:30 (CC)	26	27
28	29 Possibly SMA 12:30 to 3:30 - Ladies Group (MC)	30				

Our **Mobile Career Centers** provide four to ten computer workstations and provide access to the Internet as well as standard office equipment and can assist you with your reemployment needs. The Mobile Career Centers visit locations in Citrus, Levy and Marion Counties. For more information, contact Penny Spence at **800-434-5627, ext. 1933** or pspence@careersourceclm.com. **All services are free of charge.**

CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids/services are available upon request to persons with disabilities and in Spanish. Phone numbers may be reached using TTY/TDD equipment via Florida Relay at 711. For accommodations, call 800-434-5627, ext. 7878. Programs funded by CareerSource CLM as grantee of the U.S. Department of Labor as part of awards totaling \$7.9 million, revised annually, with no funds from non-governmental sources. A proud partner of the American Job Center network and member of CareerSource Florida



www.scacommunities.org

Strategic Community Alliance, Inc. presents
LILAC Assemblage of Southeast Asian Dances



A unique opportunity to see Indian international dancer and choreographer Binal Wala along with traditional Vietnamese, Pilipino, Japanese, Mongolian, Korean dances by Asian Cultural Performers.

April 13, 2024 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm
Doors open at 6:00 pm

Venue
College of Central Florida, DASSANCE Fine Arts Center
3001 SW College Road, Ocala, Florida 34474

This is a free event; however, donations are strongly recommended for this unique and rare performance.

For more information, please contact

Dr. Sheni Meghani at shenimeghani@yahoo.com or 267.575.1227

This event is curated by Strategic Community Alliance, Inc. and is a part of Strategic Community Alliance, Inc.'s Experience India Artist in Residence program sponsored by



Strategic Community Alliance, Inc. (SCA) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization registered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) #CH67488. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800-435-7352) WITHIN THE STATE OR (850) 410-3800 CALLING FROM OUTSIDE OF FLORIDA. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE. The Department's website is www.fdacs.gov. Your donation is tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. Please consult your tax consultant. Our Federal Tax Identification number is 88-0586533.

April 6, 2024
LOCATION
MARION OAKS COMMUNITY CENTER
294 Marion Oaks Lane
Ocala, FL 34473
Walk Starts 11AM
Event Ends 1PM

OASN
11th Annual
SUPER HERO
FUN WALK

REGISTER FOR EVENT
<https://oasn.info/annual-walk>

For More Information, contact
Ana at (352)462-0168
or
avonsander@oasn.info

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Games
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AND MUCH MORE!

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R.A.M.A.L. Educational and Social Services, Inc.

Presents
2024 FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT EVENT

Howard Academy Community Center
306 NW 7th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34475

Saturday, April 27, 2024
10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Action Steps To Own
A Home, Improve
Credit Scores, Connect
With Financial
Institutions, Leaving A
Financial Legacy,
Develop A Will & Trust,
Using Life Insurance As
Collateral, Protecting
Your Assets With
Insurance



Vendors • Giveaways • Food • Grand Prize \$250 Value
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SPONSORED BY



Contact: Barbara J. Brooks, Ph.D.
(352) 875-4237 • www.ramalservices.org



FREE
event for
families!

**Family Fun
Health Fair**

10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday, April 6
Mary Sue Rich Community Center
1821 NW 21st Ave, Ocala, FL 34475

Bring the whole family as the Florida Department of Health in Marion County hosts this **free** event to promote health and wellness.

This event will feature many activities and information presented by our community partners that can improve your health and well-being, including:

- Food & music
- Games & facepainting
- Health screenings
- On-site ultrasound (if suggested following health screen)
- Community resources
- Health Education
- and much more!

To learn more, contact Monica Dasilva at Monica.Dasilva@FLHealth.gov or 352-644-2679.





SAVE THE DATE

The Ocala Juneteenth
Celebration Commission

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

Saturday, June 15, 2024
10am to 4pm

Webb Field
1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd. - Ocala, FL 34475

For more information, email
ocalajuneteenth2020@gmail.com

FOOD ★ VENDORS ★ ENTERTAINMENT
& MORE!



PSI CHI CHAPTER
OF
OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY
PRESENTS



APRIL 20TH, 2024



NEW COVENANT MISSIONARY
BAPTIST CHURCH | 606 SW BROADWAY ST OCALA, FL 34475

All High School grade levels accepted
Top 3 Winners Receive Cash Prize
Application Deadline Due April 6th

352-895-1429

CONTACT

Ronald Jones



A 501 (c)(3) Non-Profit Organization for Public Charities

Present! Juneteenth: Grown Folks A Night of Elegance

FEATURED SPEAKER:

REV. DR. JOY L. GALLMON

American Sunday Plate Catering

Ex Chef Mario Motier

Kim's Unique DECOR * MORE

Dances by:

Be Heard Through Movement, Orlando, Fla

Special Guest

Ticket admission \$50

Sponsorship packages available

Entertainment By: DJ Tony, Dothan, AL

FREE GIVEAWAYS

3-\$1,000 Scholarship Awarded

Mary Sue Rich Community

Center at Reeds Place

1821 NW 21st Ave. Ocala FL 34475

6pm - 11pm



Michelle Lamb

Friday June 14, 2024

APRIL IS NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Rometha Gilmore's parents never talked to her about safety, but she said she wished they would have. Although they didn't, Gilmore makes sure that she does. During the course of the year she has group discussions on safety with the girls she mentors, and after talking about it with them and her granddaughter, she realizes how important it is to have those conversations regularly.

"I think my parents thought that they were keeping us safe by not telling us things, but in essence, they really weren't," she said. "We need to talk about safety with all our kids, especially with our girls."

Gilmore, CEO of Girls on the Rise, an organization committed to providing additional support to black and brown girls in fourth grade and higher, said although she can't give statistics, as a former teacher working with middle school students, she saw how prevalent child abuse was. She said they had a lot of students who had been abused that went to Kimberly's Center for Child Protection and utilized other resources available in the community to help them.



Since 1983, April has been known as National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The 30-day long observance is set aside for Americans to recommit to ensuring that every kid grows up in a safe, stable and nurturing environment free from abuse and neglect, according to www.therepublic.com. The month recognizes the importance of families and communities working together to prevent child abuse and neglect.

"During the month of April, I'll be more intentional . . .," Gilmore said. "I'll make sure that we discuss it more and how prevalent it really is."



In observance of the month, the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) in Marion County's Safe Kids Coalition will plant pinwheel gardens on April 10, at 9 a.m., at its main office, located at 1801 S.E. 32nd Ave., Ocala, and at 4 p.m., the same day, at the Hampton Dental Clinic, located at 1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala.

Pinwheels, symbols of hope, safety, health and happiness, started being used nationally in 2008 to observe the month because they represent playfulness, joy and childhood, and serve as physical reminders of the great childhoods we want all children to have, according to <https://www.acaringplacecac.org>.

The pinwheels will be placed in the gardens to shine in the sun and be reflective of the bright future all children deserve.

CHILD ABUSE FACTS AND STATISTICS

- ◆ Most child victims are abused by a parent.
- ◆ More than 600,000 children are abused in the U.S. each year.
- ◆ In 2021, a reported 452,313 perpetrators abused or neglected a child. In substantiated child abuse cases 77% of children were victimized by a parent.
- ◆ Child abuse doesn't discriminate. It spans all racial, gender and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- ◆ We all must support children who find the courage to report alleged abuse.
- ◆ We all have the responsibility to provide our children with a loving nurturing environment.
- ◆ Children are our future and communities prosper when our children thrive and succeed.
- ◆ Through education, awareness, outreach and support to children and families is how we help end abuse.

Source: FDOH-Marion and Prevent Child Abuse Florida

Continued on page 9

JOIN SAFE KIDS MARION AND PLANT A PINWHEEL GARDEN

Continued from page 8

Tracey Sapp, Health Education Program Manager, for FDOH - Marion, said anyone who would like to attend the plantings are welcome, and all supplies will be provided.

Keeping kids safe is a priority for Safe Kids Marion, the local branch of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global organization dedicated to preventing injuries in children, the number one killer of kids in the United States.

Around the world, a child dies from an unintentional injury every 30 seconds, and millions of children are injured in ways that can affect them for a lifetime. The local branch has been around since 2007. However, it didn't become a Coalition until 2014.

Sapp, who's been involved with Safe Kids since 2017, said 10 organizations are currently part of the Coalition, which focuses on Safe Sleep, Pedestrian Safety, Swim Safety, Bike Safety, Car Seat Safety, Safety at Home and Heat Stroke for children zero to 17 years old. She said they would love to have additional partners get involved with the Coalition.



"We are looking for those in the community whose work or mission is around children/youth and want to help make a difference in reducing injury and death," Sapp said. "Together as partners, we can accomplish more to make a difference than working separately."



The Coalition meets the second Wednesday of every month at 9 a.m. at the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) in Marion County, 1801 S.E. 32nd Ave., Ocala. For more information, contact Safe Kids Marion chair, Nicole Brickhouse, at (352) 644-2751 or visit their Facebook page, Safe Kids Marion.



**12th ANNUAL
5K RACE
AGAINST CHILD ABUSE**

KCRACE.COM

REGISTER NOW!!

APRIL 27 2024

Ina A. Colen Academy
5080 SW 66th Ct. Rd. | Ocala | 34474

7 AM REGISTRATION & PACKET PICK UP

8 AM RACE | WALK STARTS

\$30 PER ADULT | \$10 PER KID (UNDER 10)
\$40 REGISTRATION DAY OF

SCAN HERE

Kimberly's
Center for Child Protection
Ocala, FL 34474

SHIRTS GUARANTEED TO THE FIRST 250 PEOPLE WHO REGISTER.

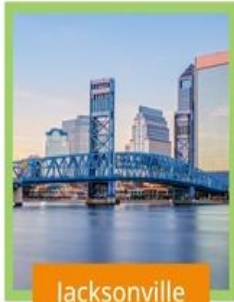
IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND BUT WISH TO MAKE A DONATION, PLEASE VISIT KIMBERLYSCENTER.ORG

April COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY Tours



Tallahassee

April 15



Jacksonville

April 17



Daytona

April 19

This immersive experience offers prospective students an unparalleled opportunity to discover the exceptional institutions that call Florida home.

7 AM - 8 PM | Ages 13 - 17
\$25 per person per trip

Registration required: OcalaFL.gov/RecPark
More information call: 352.401.6980



JOIN CF FOR ITS DENTAL OPEN HOUSE

The College of Central Florida will host a Dental Open House Wednesday, April 10, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., at the Hampton Center, 1501 W. Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala. This event celebrates the launch of the Associate in Science degree in Dental Hygiene, as well as the opening of a new community dental clinic. Prospective students, dental professionals and community members will have an opportunity to explore CF's dental programs and learn about affordable dental services.

Opening remarks will be provided by CF President Dr. James Henningsen. The event will feature admissions guidance for those interested in pursuing a career in dental health, information on scheduling low-cost dental cleanings and oral health examinations at the clinic, a meet-and-greet with CF program managers and guided tours of the dental facilities at the Hampton Center.

For more information about the Dental Open House and CF's dental programs, please visit CF.edu/DentalOpenHouse.

DONATION BENEFITS KIDS IN WEST OCALA

The Thompson McKay Post 210 donated \$300 to the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department to help children in West Ocala.

Donation provided by Commander Rev. Ernestine Porter; 1st Vice Commander Jeffery Askew and all the members (comrades) of Thompson McKay American Legion Post 210.



COMMIT YOURSELF



MARION COUNTY VOTER SUMMIT

- NAACP
All About the Ballots
NOW Marion County
Ocala Demands Action
Ocala Pride, Inc
Faith in Florida
Voters League
Equal Ground
Divine Nine
Equality Florida
Black Voters Matter
FRC
NAACP Youth Council
Black Lives Matter
League of Women Voters, Ocala
Democratic Women's Club
of Marion County

Let's Get Out the Vote!

Thursday, April 18

5:30-7PM

MLK Community Building

615 MLK Ave.

Speaker:

Wesley Wilcox (Superintendent of Elections Marion County)

linktr.ee@marioncountyvotersummit352



2024 Fair Housing Community Event



Date: Thursday, April 11
Time: 6 - 8 p.m.
Location: Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave.

Community Partners Attending:

- Marion County Community Services
- Ocala Housing Authority
- Habitat for Humanity
- Housing Finance Authority of Marion County
- Community Legal Services
- SunTran
- & more!

Join the City of Ocala's Community Development Services Department to learn more about the housing and family services available to our community.

Event Agenda

- Fair Housing 101
- Community Legal Services
- Family Consumer Services & Financial Management
- Banking 101
- Down Payment Assistance
- Strong Families, United Way of Marion County
- Infield Projects
- Surplus Land Opportunities

For questions, please contact Community Development Services at CityGrants@ocalafl.gov or call 352-629-8322.



GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Lowell Correctional Institute made a donation to Fessenden Elementary School's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). After some of the staff from the prison volunteered to grill for two back-to-back school events, Major David Lacob saw the need to help more. He then got together with some of his co-workers to get a propane grill for the PTO for future fundraising and other school events. An exceptional thank you goes to Sgt. Tammy Swengel for making this donation come to fruition.



(L to R) Warden Paul Kish; Sgt. Jacqueline Mike; Sgt. Tammy Swengel; Linda Ward, PTO President; Gwendolyn Haynes, 1st Treasurer; Thelma Archie, Volunteer; Alice Burton, 2nd Treasurer; Major David Lacob; Asst. Warden Denise Oudshoff; and Lt. John Brower. Assistant Warden Chris Sapp (not pictured).

Ocala Fire Rescue (OFR) is excited to announce the opening of employment opportunities for the positions of Firefighter/EMT and Firefighter/Paramedic. These positions come with competitive pay, an attractive benefits package, and a wide array of professional development opportunities, underscoring Ocala Fire Rescue's commitment to not only serving the community but also investing in the growth and development of its team members.

Qualified individuals who have a passion for public service, a commitment to excellence in emergency medical services, and a desire to be part of a dynamic team are encouraged to apply. OFR is looking for dedicated candidates ready to make a difference in the community, displaying courage, compassion, and a high level of professionalism.

Applications are now open, with testing for the positions slated for early May. Interested candidates can find a complete list of qualifications, job functions, and details on the comprehensive benefits package by visiting www.ocalafl.gov/employment. This is a unique opportunity to join a respected and dedicated team, committed to the safety and well-being of Ocala. Don't miss your chance to embark on a rewarding career with Ocala Fire Rescue.

For more information, please contact Ocala Fire Rescue's administrative office at (352) 629-8306.



@levittampocala

10 FREE CONCERTS

Fridays, March 15 - May 17

7 - 9 p.m. | Webb Field, 1510 NW Fourth St.
Rain location: E.D. Croskey Recreation Center

2024 LINE-UP

March 15 Americana Leon Timbo and the Family Band with Theo Moon	April 19 Cuban Jazz Iliana Rose with Sean T Music Global Group
March 22 Folk Rock Streetlight Cadence with Nicole Equerme	April 26 Country Roberta Lea with Noah Hunton
March 29 Reggae Jah Movement with Ace Winn	May 3 Soul/Gospel The Sensational Barnes Brothers with Mwiza
April 5 Heavy Metal Metalachi with El Trio Rosal	May 10 Root/R & B Kyshona with Jenna Clark
April 12 Irish Punk Clover's Revenge with Irish Dance by Gainesville Dance Academy	May 19 Funk The Rumble feat. Chief Boudreaux Jr. with Central Florida Community Arts

www.ocalafl.gov/levittamp | artinfo@ocalafl.gov



AABE Florida High School Scholarship Application Deadline

The 2024 High School Student scholarship deadline is **Monday, April 15th, 2024 @ 11:59 PM EST**. Please check the application handbook link below for more details.

For the scholarship online application portal, go to <https://aabescholarship.awardspring.com/Home/ScholarshipDetails/271462>. Eligibility and Application, go to: <https://dx1530.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/2024-AABE-FL-HS-Scholarship-Handbook-Final.pdf> for the 2024 High School Student Criteria and Application Handbook.

Selection Criteria: Scholarship recipients are determined by the AABE Florida Chapter Scholarship Committee:

- The student must have a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
- Be a graduating high school senior who has applied to one or more accredited colleges/universities.
- Plan to major in business, one of the physical sciences, technology, engineering or mathematics fields in preparation for a career in the energy sector
- The student must be one of the underrepresented minorities (African American, Hispanic or Native American).
- If applying for any Florida Chapter scholarships, is a Florida resident or resides in an area where the Florida Chapter is the nearest AABE chapter
- If applying for the Florida Chapter need-based scholarship, exhibits financial need and meets all other eligibility criteria. (Financial need is not a consideration for other Florida Chapter, regional and national awards.)

MONEY SMART TIPS

By Scott Hackmyer

WHY RENT WHEN YOU CAN BE A HOMEOWNER

If you are tired of paying rent, especially with how high rental costs have become, and are interested in buying your own home please mark your calendars for a Fair Housing Month event hosted by the City of Ocala on April 11, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center, 1821 N.W. 21st Ave. With a focus on Affordable Housing there will be a number of speakers and informational tables set up from various lenders; Habitat for Humanity, United Way, Community Legal Services, City and County Departments and other agencies that have resources to help with costs and suggestions on what you can do to get prepared to apply and get approved for funding to buy your own home. When you start shopping for your own home Zillow has some interesting information that they recently shared. They found that 72% of homebuyers have at least one regret about the home they bought. They stress the importance of location and layout. I remember one year I rented an apartment in Gainesville when I had just graduated from college. It faced right onto Archer Road and for the entire year of the lease I had to put up with the daily traffic noise from that very busy road. The apartment was so nice I overlooked that one fact that made living there miserable. When home shopping don't let what looks like a great house make you overlook the things that are most important to you. Zillow says 28% of buyers wish they had purchased in a different location. Make sure you are away from things that will bother you such as noise or smells. Will your commute to work be too long, wasting time and gas money? Are you in the school zones you want to be in? Is the layout right? If you like to entertain or cook does the new house have a large kitchen? If you like to garden is your yard large enough, or if you hate mowing and doing yard work is the lot too large? Make sure you check out the builder's reputation if building; are they responsive to your needs and do they keep to an agreed upon time schedule. Some people like renting as the landlord takes care of upkeep and repairs but others see that home ownership has traditionally been a path to helping build wealth over time.



Something to look forward to is that the City of Ocala has lowered your electric rate. When you get your new bill, for every 1,000 kwh used your bill will be 8.1% lower which equals a reduction of \$14.83 for those 1,000 hours. Don't forget all the little things you can do to help lower your bill. I have written before about turning off lights when no one is in the room, don't leave the television on if no one is watching, with warm weather coming do some caulking around windows and doors if your seals are no longer airtight and set your air conditioning thermostat as high as possible while still being comfortable to keep those cooling costs down. Don't forget to keep that AC filter clean and turn off power strips leading to all your electronics that you aren't using.

If you have a son or daughter, relative or friend with a child that is graduating high school this year this is scholarship time. There are so many scholarships out there for college and trade schools and amazingly many of them go unclaimed. Call and search websites for every college you are interested in to ask about scholarship opportunities. Reach out to civic clubs, fraternities, sororities and trade groups to ask if they offer scholarships. Some take financial need into consideration and some do not. I was so surprised last year to learn about a college scholarship to be on the fishing team. There are scholarships for everything so jump on Google or any search engine and start looking for a way to help pay for those college costs.

Business Spotlight



Business Name: Helping Hands Photography and Desktop Publishing, LLC.

No. of Employees: 1

Business Owner: Cynthia Wilson Graham

Business Address: P.O. Box 6752, Ocala, FL 34478

Business Phone: (352) 286-1772

What Year Did You Start Your Business?
More than 20 years ago

Hours of Operation: By Appointment Only

Products and/or Services: Photography and Desktop Publishing

Email: hhp5032c@icloud.com

Website: helpinghandsphotography.com

Are you on Social Media? Yes
Facebook and Twitter

What or Who Inspired you to start your business?
My mother and a lack of businesses that provided on-site services to homebound individuals.

What Makes Your Business Unique or What's Your Specialty? I travel to most clients, and I enjoy photographing senior citizens and special needs children and families in their environments. I also like to document historical events, places and items to preserve the cultural history and facts of communities in various places.

What Advice Would You Give Someone Starting a Business? Just because another business provides similar services doesn't mean your business can't be successful.

Any Additional Comments?
My motto is: Always willing to lend a Helping Hand because he is my helper

The **Small Business Profile** is **FREE** and open to small businesses located in Marion County with less than 25 employees or solo entrepreneurs.

To have your business featured in an upcoming edition, please request a form by emailing Towntalkmagazine@yahoo.com. Completed forms can be returned via email or mailed to P.O. Box 6212, Ocala, FL 34478.

Calvary Missionary Baptist Church
 7330 W. Hwy 329
 Reddick, FL. 32686

-GUEST SPEAKERS-

April 7 @ 3pm
 Rev Eric Cumminings,
 New Zion, MBC

April 10 @ 7pm
 Rev Howard Gunn
 Clearwater MBC

April 14 @ 3pm
 Rev Dr. Jerry Alexander
 Mt. Moriah MBC

*Come and Celebrate Rev. Victor Boynton's
 24th Pastor Anniversary*
 "For We Walked By Faith, And Not By Sight"
 2 Corinthians 5:7

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY, INC.
 ETA TAU OMEGA CHAPTER

POP-UP SHOP

SUPPORT LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

SATURDAY, APRIL 27
 EVENT FROM 10 AM - 2 PM
 VENDORS + FOOD + SPEAKERS
 ENTREPRENEUR RESOURCES

THE EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE AT

E D CROSKEY RECREATION CENTER
 1510 NW 4TH ST, OCALA, FL 34475

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BECOMING A VENDOR
 PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE

APR 26
 FRI 7:30PM

OCALA YOUTH CONFERENCE

ocala.church/youth

Ocala Church, 2940 NE 35th St, Ocala, FL, For more information and inquiries, contact Ocala Church on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/events/1046219749789390/?ref=newsfeed> or visit them online at <https://ocala.church>.

CATCH UP WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CITY OF OCALA

CITY RESIDENTS TO GET A BREAK ON ELECTRIC BILL

City of Ocala electric customers will notice some financial relief beginning in March. On February 6, the Ocala City Council members approved a reduction to the power cost adjustment (PCA) rate and an increase in the electric base rates, which will result in an approximate eight percent decrease in customers' monthly bills.

Effective Friday, March 1, the PCA rate will be lowered from \$0.056 to 0.02815 per kilowatt hour (kWh) and the energy charge (base rate) will increase from \$0.08964 to \$0.10126 per kWh, resulting in overall rate reduction. The customer service charge, which is assessed to each customer every month, will be raised from the current \$17 dollars to \$20 dollars.

Residential customers who consume approximately 1,000 kWh will experience a reduction of \$14.93, or 8.1 percent, in their overall bill. The exact amount of reduction will vary depending on individual energy consumption. For commercial and industrial customers, a similar monthly reduction will be reflected.

For customers with questions or concerns, please call the Customer Service Office at (352) 629-2489.

LIFEGUARDS NEEDED: APPLY NOW

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department is seeking applicants for seasonal lifeguards. This position is open to all ages 16+ who can pass the pre-requisites and holds a current lifeguard certification. Candidates must swim 150 yards continuously, submerge to a depth of 7 to 10 feet and tread water for two minutes.

Starting pay is \$19 per hour, with returning lifeguards starting at \$20 per hour. The city is offering a retention bonus of \$1,000 plus reimbursement of lifeguard certification program fees. To receive the bonus, staff must sign a contract with Human Resources, work a minimum of 24 hours each week, and miss no more than three scheduled days for the season. Applications will remain open until filled. The full job description can be found on the City of Ocala website under **career opportunities**. For more information about Ocala Recreation and Parks, go to www.ocalafl.org/recpark or call (352) 368-5517.

SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The City of Ocala announces the summer youth employment program, Ocala Future Leaders' Academy 2024. The program is designed to create on-the-job training in preparation for future roles within the organization. Applications are open to students, ages 16-19, who are currently enrolled in a Marion County high school. A total of 25 applicants will be chosen to participate in this year's academy.

Training seminars will focus on personal and professional growth, financial literacy and technical job skills and certifications. Each student will be assigned a mentor to assist with learning job assignments, improving interpersonal skills and enhancing self-confidence.

This is a paid program and participants are expected to work 20 - 25 hours per week. Transportation assistance will be provided to students in the form of a SunTran bus pass valid only for the program period.

Program Overview:

- Applications must be submitted by 5 p.m. on April 12, 2024
- Qualified applicants will be interviewed via Zoom in May 2024
- Selected applicants will be notified in May 2024
- Paid training will be June 3-14, 2024
- Department work assignments take place June 17 to July 26, 2024
- The hourly rate is \$15.00 per hour

Applications may be submitted online in the **employment section** of the City of Ocala's website. For more information, please contact the City of Ocala Human Resources department at (352) 629-8359.

JOIN US: CITY CAREER EXPLORATION PANEL

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department will host a Career Exploration Panel on Thursday evenings from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave. The program is free and open to the public. Registration not required.

Beginning April 4 and continuing through May 2, each week industry professionals will engage in insightful discussions about various career paths. The event is designed to provide valuable information to help youth make informed decisions about future careers. Discussion topics will focus on an overview of the featured industry, career paths, education requirements, salary, diversity, and inclusion.

Featured industries will include law enforcement, financing and banking, school systems, medicine and construction. For more information go to www.ocalafl.gov/RecPark.

SPLASH PADS OPEN FOR THE SEASON

The City of Ocala splash pads located at Citizens' Circle, 151 S.E. Osceola Ave., and Lily's Pad, 2200 N.W. 17th Pl., are open for the season. Daily hours of operation are sunrise to sunset. Splash pads are free to the public.



For more information, contact the City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department at (352) 368-5517 or visit www.ocalafl.gov/aquatics.

SIGN UP FOR FREE EYEONWATER ACCOUNT

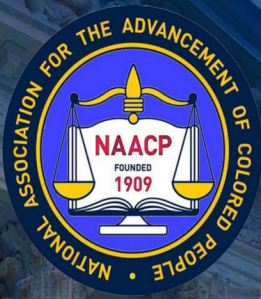
The City of Ocala Water Resources Department encourages water utility customers sign up for a free EyeOnWater® account, which connects customers to their smart water meter.

Using EyeOnWater®, customers can access their daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly water usage and receive potential leak notifications. Customers can go a step further and use the savings calculator to identify potential water saving actions like installing high-efficiency toilets.

To sign up for a free EyeOnWater® account:

1. Visit <https://eyeonwater.com/signup> or download the EyeOnWater® from the Apple App Store or Google Play.
2. Enter the account number, found on customer utility bill. Enter the account number using a hyphen between each of the six digits. (Ex: 123456-123456)
3. Enter billing ZIP code.
4. Click next.
5. Enter your email address.
6. Create and confirm a password.
7. Check the email and verify the address by clicking the confirmation link from Badger Meter Inc.
8. Sign in and let the water savings begin!

For more information, please call the City of Ocala Water Resources Department at (352) 351-6772 or visit



NAACP 5114 MARION COUNTY BRANCH PRESENTS

"Protecting Our Right to Vote"

42nd Annual Freedom Fund Banquet & Awards Ceremony

**Speaker:
Jerron Hawkins**

FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2024 7:00PM

Appointee at the Department of Justice serving as Policy Advisor for the office of Community Relation Services (CRS)



Semi-Formal Attire

NAACP Office (352) 351-4560
Zelle: marioncountyflnaacp@gmail.com
Cash app: \$NAACPmarioncountyfl

Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place
1821 NW 21st Avenue, Ocala, Florida 34475

Tickets: \$75
(2) Tickets: \$140
Table (10): \$800

Oso Ocala Steel Orchestra presents



INTERNATIONAL JAZZ Art & Poetry Festival Ocala

Tribute to Barry Harris

TUE APRIL 30



Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place, 1821 NW 21st Ave, Ocala, FL 34475

6:00PM FREE
to benefit Ocala Steel Orchestra 501(c)(3)



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Ocala, FL 34478

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IBREAKBARRIERS.ORG

IBreakBarriers 2nd Chance Event



Event Host **Guest Performance**



DR. MURDAUGH
MT. ZION AME PASTOR

VICKIE WINANS
AMERICAN GOSPEL SINGER

NEW DATE
APRIL
14
2024

5 - 8 PM

Mary Sue Rich Community Center at Reed Place
1821 NW 21st Ave, Ocala, FL 34475

Tickets are a \$100 donation per person or \$900 for a table of 10 before March 13th!
All proceeds will go to support BREAK BARRIERS, a 501©(3) non-profit.

Tickets are \$150 at the door

To learn more, or for Sponsorship opportunities, please visit our website or contact Amari at
(904) 840-5092